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A. H. BUCKNER, "POWER IS EVER STEALING FROM THE MANY TO THE FEW." EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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SPEECH OF MR. CALHOUN.

OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

In Senate of the United States August 23, 1841 *On the Distribution Bill.*

[CONCLUDED.]

The portion that might fall to the States not indebted, or those not deeply so, would probably for the most part be pledged as a fund on which to make new loans for new schemes similar to those for which the existing State debts were contracted. It may not be applied so at first; but such would most likely be the application on the first swell of the tide of expansion. Supposing one half of the whole sum to be derived from the lands should be so applied: estimating the income from that source at five millions, the half would furnish the basis of a new debt of forty or fifty millions. Stock to that amount would be created, would find its way to foreign markets; and would turn, as other stocks of like kind have, in swelling the tide of imports in the first instance, but in the end by dimishing them to an amount equal to the interest on the sum borrowed, and cutting off in the same proportion the permanent revenue from the customs:—and this, when the whole support of the Government is about to be thrown exclusively on the foreign commerce of the country. So much for the permanent effects in a financial view, of this measure.

The swelling of the tide of imports, in the first instance, from the loans, would lead to a corresponding flush of revenue, and that to extravagant expenditures, to be followed by embarrassments of the Treasury, and a glut of goods, which would bring on a corresponding pressure on the manufactures; when my friend from Massachusetts, (Mr. Bates,) and other Senators from that quarter, would cry out for additional protection, to guard against the necessary consequences of the very measures they are now so urgently pressing through the Senate. Such would be the consequences of this measure, regarded as one of finance, and in reference to its internal operation. It is not possible but that such a measure, so unequal and unjust between State and State, section and section—between those who live by their own means and industry, and those who live or expect to live on the public crib—would add greatly to that discord and strife within, and weakness without, which is necessarily consequent on the entire system of measures of which it forms a part.

But its mischievous effects on the exterior relations of the country would not be limited to its indirect consequences. There it would strike a direct and deadly blow, by withdrawing entirely from the defences of the country one of the two sources of the revenue, and that much the most permanent and growing. It is now in the power of Congress to pledge permanently this great and increasing fund to that important object—to completing the system of fortifications, and building, equipping, and maintaining a gallant navy. It was proposed to strike out the whole bill; to expunge the detested project of distribution; and to substitute in its place the revenue from the public lands, as a permanent fund, sacred to the defences of the country. And from what quarter did this patriotic and truly statesmanlike proposition come? From the far and gallant west; from a Senator (Mr. Linn) of a State the most remote from the ocean, and secure from danger. And by whom was it voted down?—Strange to tell, by Senators from maratime States—States most exposed, and having the deepest interest in the measure defeated by their own representatives on this floor.—Wonderful as it may seem, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina, each gave a vote against it. North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey gave each two votes against it. New York gave one; and every vote from New England, but two from New Hampshire and one from Maine, was cast against it.

Be it remembered in all after times, that these votes from States so exposed, and having so deep an interest in the defence of the country, were cast in favor of distribution—of giving gratuitously a large portion of the fund from the public domain to wealthy British capitalists, and against the proposition for applying it permanently to the sacred purpose of defending their own shores from insult and danger. How strange that New York and New England, with their hundreds of millions of property and so many thousand of hardy and enterprising sailors annually afloat, should give so large a vote for a measure above all others the most calculated to withdraw protection from both, and so small a vote against one best calculated to afford them protection! But strange as that may be, it is still more strange that the staple States,—the States that will receive so little from distribution, and which must pay so much to make up the deficiency it will cause—States so defenceless on their maratime frontier—should cast so large a vote for their own oppression, and against their own defence! Can folly, can party infatuation, be the cause one or both go further?

Let me say to the Senators from the commercial and navigating States, in all soberness, that there is now a warm and generous feeling diffused throughout the entire Union in favor of the arm of defence with which your interest and glory are so closely identified. Is it wise, by any act of yours, to weaken or alienate such feelings? And could you do an act more directly calculated to do so? Remember, it is a deep principle of our nature not to regard the safety of those who do not regard their own. If you are indifferent to your own safety, you must not be surprised if those less interested should become still more so.

But as much as the defences of the country would be weakened directly by the withdrawal of so large a fund, the blow would be by no means so heavy as that which in its consequences, would fall on them. That would paralyze the right arm of our power. To understand fully how it would have that effect, we must look not only to the amount of the sum to be withdrawn, but also on what the burden would fall to make up the deficiency—It would fall on the commerce of the country, exactly where it would do most to cripple the means of defence. To illustrate the truth of what I state, it will be necessary to inquire what would be our best system of defence. And that would involve the prior question,—from what quarter are we most exposed to danger? With that, I shall accordingly begin.

There is but one nation on the globe from which we have any thing serious to apprehend; but that is the most powerful that now exists, or ever did exist. I refer to Great Britain. She is in effect our near neighbor though the wide Atlantic divides us. Her colonial possessions stretch along the whole extent of our eastern and northern borders, from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean. Her power and influence extend over the numerous Indian tribes scattered along our western border from our northern boundary to the infant republic of Texas. But it is on our maratime frontier, extending from the mouth of the Sabine to that of St Croix—a distance, with the undulations, of the coast of thousands of miles deeply indented with bays and navigable rivers, and studded with our great commercial emporiums;—it is there, on that long line of frontier, that she is the most powerful, and we the weakest and most vulnerable. It is there she stands ready, with her powarful navy, sheltered in the commanding positions of Halifax Bermuda, and the Bahamas, to strike a blow at any point she may select on this long line of coast. Such is the quarter from which only we have danger to apprehend; and the important inquiry which next presents itself is, how can we best defend ourselves against a power so formidable, thus touching us on all points, excepting the small portion of our boundary along which Texas joins us?

Every portion of our extended frontier demands attention, inland as well as maritime? but with this striking difference:—that on the former, our power is much greater than hers is greater than ours on the maritime.—There we would be the assailant; and whatever works may be erected there ought to have reference to that fact, and look mainly to protecting important points from sudden seizure and devastation, rather than to guard against any permanent lodgment of a force within our borders.

The difficult problem is the defence of our maritime frontier. That of course, must consist of fortifications and navy; but the question is, which ought to be mainly relied on, and to what extent the one may be considered as superseding the other. On both these points I propose to make a few remarks.

Fortifications, as the means of defence, are liable to two formidable ojections, either of which is decisive against them as an exclusive system of defence. The first is, that they are purely defensive. Let the system be ever so perfect the works located to the greatest advantage, and planned and constructed in the best manner, and all they can do is to repel attack. They cannot assail.—They are like a shield without a sword. If they should be regarded as sufficient to defend our maritime cities, still they cannot command respect, or give security to our widely spread and important commercial and navigable interests.

But regarded simply as the means of defence, they are defective. Fortifications are nothing without men to garrison them; and if we should have no other means of defence, Great Britain could compel us with a moderate fleet stationed at the points mentioned, and with but a small portion of her large military establishment, to keep up on our part, to guard our coast, ten times the force, at many times the cost to garrison our numerous forts. Aided by the swiftness of steam, she could menace at the same time every point of our coast; while we, ignorant of the time or point where the blow might fall, would have to stand prepared, at every moment and at every point, to repeal her attack. A hundred thousand men constantly under arms would be insufficient for the purpose: and we would be compelled to yield, in the end, ingloriously, without striking a blow, simply from the exhaustion of our means.

Some other mode of defence, then, must be sought. There is none other but the navy. I, of course include steam as well as sails. If we want to defend our coast and protect our rights abroad, it is absolutely necessary. The only questions are, how far our naval force ought to be carried; and to what extent it would supersede the system of fortifications?

Before I enter on the consideration of this important point, I owe it to myself and the subject to premises that my policy is peace, and that I look to the navy but as the right arm *of defence—not as an instrument of conquest or aggrandizement.* Our road to greatness, as I said on a late occasion, lies not over ruins of others. Providence has bestowed on us a new and vast region, abounding in resources beyond any country of the same extent on the globe. Ours is a peaceful task—to improve this rich inheritance! to level its forests; cultivate its fertile soil; develope its vast mineral resource; give the greatest rapidity and facility of intercourse between its widely extended parts; stud its wide surface with flourishing cities, towns, and villages; spread over our richly cultivated fields. So vast is our country that generations after generations may pass away in executing this task during the whole of which time we would be rising more surely and rapidly in numbers, wealth, greatness, and influence, than any other people have ever done by arms. But to carry out successfully this, our true plan of acquiring greatness and happiness, it is not of itself sufficient to have peace and tranquility within. These are indeed necessary, in order to leave the States and their citizens in the full and undisturbed possession of their resources and energy, by which to work out, in generous rivalry, the high destiny which certainly awaits our country if we should be but true to ourselves.—But, as important as they may be, it is not much less so to have safety against external danger, and the influence and respectability abroad necessary to secure our exterior interests and rights (so important to our prosperity) against aggression. I look to a navy for these objects; and it is within the limits they assign I would confine its growth. To what extent, then, with these views, ought our navy to be carried? In my opinion, any navy less than that which would give us the habitual command of our own coast and seas, would be little short of useless. One that could be derived from sea and kept in harbor by the force which Great Britain could safely and constantly allot to our coast, would be of but little more service than in auxiliary aid to our fortifications in defending our harbors and maritime cities. I would be almost as passive as they are, and would do nothing to diminish the expense, which I have known would be so exhausting, to defend the coast exclusively by fortifications.

But the difficult question still remains to be solved—What naval force would be sufficient for that purpose? It will not be expected that I should give more than a conjectural answer to such a question. I have neither the data nor the knowledge of naval warfare to speak with any thing like precision; but I feel assured that the force required would be far less than what would be thought when the question is fairly propounded.—The very idea of defending ourselves on the ocean against the immense power of Great Britain on that element, has something startling at the first blush. But, as greatly as she outnumbers us in ships and naval resources, we have advantages that countervail that, in reference to the subject in hand. If she has many ships, she has also many points to guard, and these as widely separated as are the parts of her widely extended empire. She is forced to keep a home fleet in the channel,—another in the Baltic,—another in the Mediteranean,—one beyond the Cape of Good Hope, to guard her important possessions in the east, and another in the Pacific. Our situatian is the reverse. We have no foreign possessions, and not a point to guard beyond our own maritime frontier. There our whole force may be concentrated, ready to strike whenever a vulnerable point is exposed. If to these advantages be added that both France and Russia have large naval forces; that between us and them there is no point of conflict; that they both watch the naval supremecy of Great Britain with jealousy; and that nothing is more easy than for us to keep on good terms with both Powers, especially with a respectable naval force at our command;—it will be readily perceived that a force far short of that of Great Britain, would effect what I contemplate. I would say a force equal to one-third of hers would suffice; but if not, certainly less than half would. And if so, a naval force of that size would enable us to dispense with all fortifications, except at important points, and such as might be necessary in reference to the navy itself, to the great relief of the Treasury, and saving of means to be applied to the navy, where it would be far more efficient. The less considerate points might be safely left to the defence of cheap works, sufficient to repel plundering attacks; as no large fleet, such as would be able to meet us, with such a naval force as that proposed, would ever think of disgracing itself by attacking places so inconsiderable.

Assuming, then, that a navy is indispensable to our defence, and that one less than that supposed would be in a great measure useless, we are naturally led to look into the sources of our naval power preparatory to the constderation of the question, how they will be effected by imposing on commerce the additional burden this bill would make necessary.

Two elements are necessary to naval power—sailors and money. A navy is an expensive force and is only formidable when manned with regularly-bred sailors. In our case, both of these depend on commerce.—Commerce is indispensable to form a commercial marine, and that to form a naval marine; whence commerce is with us, if this bill should pass, the only source of revenue. A flourishing commerce is, then, in every respect, the basis of our naval power; and cripple commerce is to cripple that power—to paralyze the right arm of our defence. But the imposition of onerous duties on commerce is the most certain way to cripple it. Hence this detestable and mischievous measure, which surrenders the only other source of revenue, and throws the whole burden of supporting the Government exclusively on commerce, aims a deadly blow at the vitals of our power.

The fatal effort of high duties on commerce is no longer a matter of speculation. This country has passed recently through two periods—one of protective tariffs and high duties, and the other of reduction of duties, and the other of reduction of duties; and we have the effects of each in our official tables, both as regards our tonnage and commerce. They speak a language not be mistaken, and far stronger than any one could anticipate who has not looked into the tables, or made himself well acquainted with the powerful operation of low duties in extending navigation and commerce. As much as I had anticipated from their effects, the reduction of the duties—the lightening of the burdens of commerce—have greatly exceeded my most sanguine expectations.

I shall begin with the tonnage, as more immediately connected with naval power; and, in order to show the relative effects of high duties and low on our navigation I shall compare the period from 1824; when the first great increase of protective duties took place, to 1830, inclusive, when the first reduction of duties commenced, during these seven years, which include the operation of the two protective tariffs of 1824 and 1828, that is, the reign of the high protective tariff system—our foreign tonnage fell off from 629 972 tons to 576,475, equal to 615,310, equal to 103,880 tons—making the falling off in both equal to 267,370 tons. Yes; to that extent (103,880) did our our coasting tonnage decline—the navy tonnage, the increase of which, it was confident predicted by the protective party, would make up for every public loss in our foreign tonnage from their miserable quack system. Instead of that, the falling off, in the coasting trade is even greater than in the foreign; proving clearly high duties are not less injurious at home than to the foreign trade.

I pass now to the period (I will not say of free trade—it is far short of that) of reducing of high protective duties; and now make the the contract between the two. I begin with the year 1831, the first after the reduction was made on a few articles, (principally coffee and tea,) and will take in the entire period down to the last returns—that of 1840—making a period of ten years. This period includes the great reduction under the compromise act, which is not yet completed, and which, in its further progress, would add greatly to the increase, if permitted to go through undisturbed. The tonnage in the foreign trade increased during that period from 576-475 tons to 899,764, equal to 323,288 tons—not much less than two-thirds of the whole amount at the commencement of the period; and the coasting for the same period increased from 615,310 to 1,280,999, equal to 665,699 tons—more than double; and this too, when, according to the tariff doctrine, our coasting trade ought to have fallen off, increasing, (in consequence of the reduction of the duties;) and thus incontestibly proving that low duties are not less favorable to our domestic than to our foreign trade. The aggregate tonnage for the period has increased from 1,191,776 to 2,180,763—nearly doubled. Such and so favorable to low duties in reference to tonnage is the result of the comparison between the two periods.

The comparison in reference to commerce will prove not less so. In making the comparison. I shall confine myself to the export trade, not because it gives results more favorable,—for the reverse is the fact, but because the heavy loans contracted by the States during the latter period (between 1830 and 1841) gave a fictitious increase to the imports which would make the comparison appear more faverable than it ought in reality to be. Their effect were different on the imports. They tended to decrease rather than increase their amount. Of the exports, I shall select domestic articles only, because they only are affected by the rate of the duties, as the duties on foreign articles, paid or secured by bond on their importation, are returned on reshipment. With these explanatory remarks, I shall now proceed to the Comparison.

The amount in value of domestic articles exported for 1825 was $66,944,745, and in the year 1830 $59,462,029; making a falling off, under the high tariff system during that period, of $7,482,718. Divide the period into two equal parts, of three years each, and it will be found that the falling off in the aggregate of the latter part, compared to the former, is $13,090,255; showing an average annual decrease of $4,963,318 during the latter part, compared with the former.

The result will be found very different on turning to the period from 1830, when the reduction of the duties commenced, to 1840, during the whole of which the reduction has been going on. The value of domestic exports for 1831 was $61,277,057, and for 1840 $113,895,634, making a difference of $52,018,577, equal to eighty-three per cent. (omitting fractions) for the ten years. If the period be divided into two equal parts of five years each, the increase of the latter, compared to the former, will be found to be $139,089,371; making an average annual increase for the latter period (from 1835 to 1840) of $27,817,654 This rapid increase began with the great reduction under the compromise act of 1833. The very next year after it passed, the domestic exports rose from $31,034,162 to $101,189,2—just like the recoil which takes place when the weight is removed from the spring.

But my friends from the manufacturing States will doubtless say that this vast increase of exports from reduction of duties was confined to the great agricultural staples, and that the effects were the reverse as to the export of domestic manufactures. With their notion of protection, they cannot be prepared to believe that low duties are favorable to them. I ask them to give me their attention, while I show how great their error is, So far from not partaking of this mighty impulse from the reduction they felt it more powerfully than other articles of domestic exports, as I shall now proceed to show from the tables.

The exports of domestic manufacturies during the period from 1824 to 1832, inclusive—that is, the period of the high protective duties under the tariffs of 1824 and 1828 fell from $2,729,797 $5,050,633, making a decline of $679,133 during that period.—This decline was progressive and nearly uniform from year to year, through the whole period. In 1833 the compromise act was passed, which reduced the duties at once nearly half, and has since made very considerable progressive reduction. The exports of domestic manufactures suddenly, as if by magic, sprung forward and have been rapidly and uniformly increasing ever since; having risen in the eight years from 1832 to 1840 from $5,050,633 to $12,103,538 a third more than double in that short period, and that immediately following a great decline in the preceeding period of eight years, under such high duties.

Such were the blighting effects of high duties on the tonnage and commerce of the country, and such the invigorating effects of their reduction. There can be no mistake. The documents from which the statements are taken are among the public records, and open to the inspection of all.—The results are passed on the operation of a series of years, showing them to be the consequence of fixed and steady causes, and not accidental circumstances; while the immediate and progressive decrease of tonnage, both coastwise and foreign and of exports, including manufactured as well as other articles, with the laying on of high duties, and the commencement and progress of their reduction, point out beyond all controversy, *high duties to be the cause of one, and reduction—low duties—that of the other.*

Let me add Mr. President, that of this highly prosperous period to industry, however disastrous to those who have over speculated, or invested their funds in rotten and swindling institutions,) the most prosperous of the whole; as the tables will show, is that during the operation of the sub-treasury,—a period when some progess was made towards the restoration of the currency of the constitution. In spite of the many difficulties and embarrassments of that trying period, the progressive reduction of the duties and the gradual introduction of a sounder currency, gave so vigorous a spring to our industry as to overcome them all; showing clearly, if the country was blessed will the full and steady operation of the two, under favorable circumstances, that it would enjoy a degree of prosperity exceeding what even the friends of that measure anticipated.

It will be in vain for the advocates of high duties to seek for a different explanation of the cause of these striking and convincing facts in the history of the two periods. The first of these from 1824 to 1832, is the very